



LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

TESTIMONY
OF THE
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

ON
PAY EQUITY

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENTED BY
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NEA PRESIDENT

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Madame Chair:

My name is Mary Hatwood Futrell. I am president of the 1.7 million member National Education Association (NEA), which represents teachers, education support personnel, and higher education faculty in all fifty of these United States.

NEA is pleased to have this opportunity today to present our views on the Pay Equity Act of 1984, H.R. 5092, and the Federal Employees' Pay Equity Act of 1984, H.R. 4599. Although only a minute percentage of the NEA membership is employed in the federal sector, we believe these two bills have important implications for our whole membership and for working women everywhere. The NEA policy on pay equity is clear. The resolution adopted by the 1983 Representative Assembly is attached. It states in part:

"The National Education Association believes that all workers should be paid on the basis of the requirements, skills, and worth of their jobs and that factors such as the sex or race of the individual performing the job should never play a role in determining salary.

The Association supports all efforts to attain accurate and unbiased forms of job evaluation and to raise the pay of those jobs that are presently undervalued. The "market value" means of establishing pay cannot be the final determinant of pay scales, since it itself too frequently reflects the sex bias in our society."

The federal government has evolved from the New Deal to the present as a vital catalyst in the pursuit of equality for all our citizens. However, since the inception of the Reagan Administration we have seen multiple attempts by the executive branch to break the vital contract

between the people and their government-to turn back the clock on many of the gains made during the latter part of this century.

In the past two decades we have seen women enter the workforce as never before; we see them now represented to varying degrees in nearly all sectors, and all job categories. Yet, Madame Chair, despite these many gains, women still earn on the average roughly 60 percent of what men earn. Women are still found predominantly in sex segregated, low-paying jobs, and we find an increasing number of women and their families living in poverty. It is imperative for us to move forward--not in reverse as the current Administration would have it--in the fight for equity in salaries, and along with it dignity and justice for all workers in our economy.

NEA therefore believes it imperative that Congress continue to blunt the impact of moves by the Administration to renege on the federal commitment to equality. Madame Chair and Members of the Committee, you are to be commended for the leadership you have shown in sponsoring these bills, in holding these hearings, and in keeping the issue of wage parity at the forefront of public debate.

Wage Disparities Linger in Education

Those of us in education well understand the need to continue pressing for the close of the wage gap, the most persistent symptom of sexual inequality in our nation. Among NEA membership--70 percent of which is female--are school teachers, whose wages are depressed primarily because teaching has evolved as a "women's" profession; women faculty members facing uphill battles to enter higher-paid, tenured positions in the nation's colleges and universities; and education support personnel who are often stuck in job ghettos, where wage differentials occur more

commonly because of differences in job titles rather than any real differences in job responsibilities.

Therefore, we know well the meaning of the wage gap which causes the average working woman to earn only 60 percent of what male workers earn. It is this same wage gap which is forcing the increasing number of female-headed households into poverty--and further entrenching the female underclass in our society. The statistics bear this out:

- * Three out of five working women earn \$10,000 or less a year; one out of three working women earns less than \$7,000 a year; this includes 37 percent of white women; 43 percent of black women; and 50 percent of Hispanic women, compared with 12 percent of all fully employed men)
- * Median full-time earnings for women with a high school diploma were \$12,332 in 1981; men with the same diploma earned \$16,200. Only 1 percent of all working women earn over \$25,000.
- * Single women maintaining families in 1981 had a median income of \$10,802; men in the same position had median incomes of \$19,771.
- * Eight out of ten women workers are working in only 25 of 440 job categories as classified by the Department of Labor. Women are more than 60 percent or more of clerical, sales, health, and service workers; teachers and nurses.

This wage discrimination based on sex and the accompanying undervaluing of the jobs held by women has a profound effect on our whole society. A look at the teaching profession validates this effect.

Teaching: A Profession In Search of 'Professional' Pay

In 1982, a Gallup Poll showed that the public ranked education as its number one priority with regard to federal funding or programs. The public also reaffirmed the view that the quality of teachers is one of the top assets of public schools. In addition, more than half the respondents in the Gallup Poll considered poor pay the leading cause of teacher "burnout"--no surprise to the NEA whose polls show that those

leaving teaching for private sector employment report than they earn roughly 25 percent more than they did while in the classroom.

At the same time that we are told that education has a high value in our society, we find the average salary for a teacher in 1982 was \$22,019. Even in a large metropolitan area such as Los Angeles--with the nation's second largest school district--teachers' beginning wages were \$13,500 in 1981. This salary qualified a teacher maintaining a family of four for food stamps--a fine commentary on the real value we place on education.

So despite the value we supposedly place on the task performed, there is a gap in the real value the society is willing to pay for it. People who are in life-saving, life-molding "people" jobs, such as nursing and teaching, are repeatedly told through their paychecks that their work is less important than occupations which deal with machines or dollars.

Our society must begin to consistently value jobs in terms of their requirements, skills, and responsibilities--not in terms of the gender, race, or physical ability of the person doing it, and clearly, not with excuses that this is "the marketplace" at work. Valuing work on its skill components--the true underpinning of the movement for pay equity--will bring about a lasting change in the way we view and value the contributions of workers in our society.

Education Support: Not Immune from Undervaluation

Across the country, people working in education support positions, in both public school districts and in universities, are facing similar problems to those encountered by personnel in other job classifications.

Unfortunately, most of them have no union to help them resolve these pay inequities.

A review of statistics compiled by the Education Research Service Inc. (ERS), in its "Wages and Salaries Paid Support Personnel in Public Schools, 1981-82," produces similar conclusions to those uncovered by NEA studies on teachers' wages. For hourly employees, ERS statistics showed that instructional teacher aides, most of whom are female, earned \$4.88/hour; cafeteria workers, also a predominantly female classification, earned \$4.57/hour. Meanwhile, predominantly male job classes average more, with building custodians (not engineers) earning \$5.95/hour, and school bus drivers averaging \$6.26/hour.

Lofty Towers Not Immune from Earthly Problems

Wage inequities persist in the nation's institutions of higher education as well. Women comprise a little more than a quarter of all faculty, full- and part-time, in public and private institutions, mostly in the lower paid, lower-status positions. Women college faculty on the whole were paid nearly 20 percent less than their male colleagues in 1981. Men on the average earned \$26,000 while women averaged \$21,000.

Pay Equity and the Equal Rights Amendment

Despite the political climate which brought another defeat for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in a vote on the House floor last fall, the NEA believes that the ERA represents the best hope for resolving the question of the value of work and its relation to gender in our society--the issue of pay equity. Only when women are recognized as full and equal partners under the Constitution will their contributions in the workplace, in the home, and in society at large be properly valued.

This is why the NEA will continue with all its resources and full commitment to work for passage of the ERA.

Pay Equity Fight Must Continue

These past five years have brought with them a number of advances around the country in the movement for pay equity in the workplace. We have seen a number of labor unions, employee associations, and some enlightened employers bring a greater sense of justice into the workplace through law suits, collective bargaining, or management action.

Yet, we have seen no leadership to reinforce these actions from the current Administration. In fact, their only actions have been to undo what has been accomplished. Not only has the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) failed to vigorously pursue wage discrimination cases, the Reagan Administration Justice Department has shown no leadership in the enforcement of the laws against wage discrimination. Moreover, the Justice Department has acted in a manner contrary to the public good in the one case where it had an opportunity to prove that its negative image on women's issues is due to "misinterpretation by the media."

Early this year, without even having entirely reviewed the case brought by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) against the State of Washington, Justice Department lawyers decided to enter the case of the side of the employers. They are urging that the finding that women workers for the State had been discriminated against over the years be overturned. The person charged with being the Justice Department's top civil rights enforcer, William Bradford Reynolds, publicly stated in January that although he was still

reviewing the case, he had decided definitively that the judge's decision had been wrong.

Congressional Role Key

Even a glimpse at current Administration policy on important wage discrimination issues only reinforces the need for leadership at the national level--leadership which must come forth from the Congress. Education advocates have learned from the battle to retain the strength of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 that a sense of Congress can be vital when an Administration's priority is to move rapidly into the past rather than the future.

The two bills being considered in this hearing represent a good attempt to help reverse the negligent stand now being taken by the Reagan Administration on these matters so vital to our society.

The "Pay Equity Act of 1984", H.R. 5092, by reaffirming the federal government's responsibility in enforcing present wage discrimination laws, represents a way to hold the Administration at least minimally accountable on equality in the workplace -- it lets the sunshine in on issues which are hidden from public view.

In addition, passage of H.R. 4599, the "Federal Employees' Pay Equity Act of 1984," could provide a good vehicle to push the current Administration to confront the issue of wage discrimination within the federal sector. As the bargaining agent for teachers in the Department of Defense Overseas Schools we believe that Sections 4 and 5 should be amended to show a clear role for the union(s) in the study phase and agency planning phase.

Conclusion

NEA supports equal pay for work of equal value. We believe that traditional jobs which have been considered "women's work" have been undervalued and paid accordingly. We further believe that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act makes pay equity the law of the land. Congressional leadership expressed through bills such as HR 4599 and 5092 help all of us by assuring that a recalcitrant administration moves forward on women's rights.

Thank you.